

SATISFACTION AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS OF PATIENTS- A STUDY OF PRIVATE HOSPITALS

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ABSTRACT

Technological advances, rising needs of the people and growing competition lead to the growth market driven health care. Globalization, liberalization and privatization paved the way for entry of number players into the health care business with multi-crore investments. Hospitals today need to develop strategies to sustain for long term and also to grow. Under these situations patient raised to the level of customer and hospitals need to understand the expectations, needs and demands of patients to attract and retain. A continuous assessment of patient experiences with hospital is to done to understand their satisfaction level and re-design the services. Hospitals should design the service mix appropriately to understand the service gaps and to ensure service quality. The paper tries to throw light on the patient satisfaction and behavioral intentions with regard to the private hospitals across the Rayalseema region of Andhra Pradesh by conducting exit surveys.

KEYWORDS: Market Driven Health Care, Patients Experiences, Patient Satisfaction, Service Mix

INTRODUCTION

Patient satisfaction is multi dimensional concept and its achievement by hospitals is a challenging task. It is a collection of various multiple issues of health care system comprising doctors, nurses, technicians, equipment, facilities and many more. Hospitals must emphasis on patient satisfaction to obtain return on investment, increase patient traffic, gain patient acceptance of service and develop good will. In the light of the above patient satisfaction measure helps the hospitals to understand the perceived quality of hospital services.

Hospitals relatively keep less attention towards patient satisfaction and concentrate more on be better aspects such as creating corporate look with lavish and massive construction. They are of the opinion that investment on a large scale develops positive image and attracts more number of patients. Hospitals in order to satisfy and attract patients they should identify expectations of patients and design the service mix. Efficient service delivery through sequential flow of activities and interactions of patient with doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, ward boys and front line employees enhances the patient satisfaction. Hospitals may organize the exit surveys to the patients to assess its performance, strengths and weakness. There are very few instances where hospitals initiate such actions for understanding and analyzing patient satisfaction. Hospitals are giving scope for development of negative image among the patients who dissatisfy with the services of the hospitals. Patients who are dissatisfied with the services avoid the hospital in future and also tell badly about the hospital and hospital personnel to others.

The present study aims at analyzing the variables of patient satisfaction and validating their existence and importance in the selected hospitals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hulka et.al (1970) initialized the concept of patient satisfaction .They opined "satisfaction" as the patient's "attitudes toward physicians and medical care. A composite index concerning the quality of medical care received from physicians, nurses and other relevant sources is hypothesized to represent the individual's satisfaction level. Ross et al. (1987) argue that restricting patient satisfaction to quality perceptions is having an inherent weakness and said that "healthy but unhappy" patients has been found in several empirical studies and suggested to enlarge the concept of patient satisfaction to include other evaluations such as waiting time, costs, etc in addition to purely quality perceptions. Lin and Kelly (1995) opined that patient satisfaction surveys are used to examine the quality of the healthcare service provided. Chahal (2000) explained service quality of medical care with three latent constructs. These are physicians' performance, nursing performance and operational quality.

Aragon et.al.(2003) conducted a research to measure patient satisfaction considering three latent variables viz. physician service(SP), waiting time(SWT) and nursing care(SN). They applied multiple structural equation models for developing a hierarchical relationship between patient satisfaction and above-mentioned constructs and proved that overall patient satisfaction depends on SP, SN and SWT. They also agreed that overall satisfaction is positively associated with two indicators – likelihood of patients' recommendation of the health care unit and degree to which the service is worthwhile in terms of money paid by patients.

Shi and Singh (2005) explored quality as one indicator of satisfaction that depends on individual's experiences over medical service and other indicator as overall satisfaction of individuals with life as well as self-perceptions of health after some medical intervention. Safavi(2006) in his study revealed that satisfaction with hospital experience was driven by dignity and respect, speed and efficiency, comfort, information and communication and emotional support. In this study he observed that patients prefer four qualities of health care services viz. doctor communication skill, responsiveness of hospital staff, comfort and cleanliness of the hospital environment and communication of nursing staff. Marrakchi et.al (2008) developed the Tunisian Measurement Scale for measurement of patient satisfaction on the basis of seven latent variables viz. reception, nursing care, information, hygiene, comfort, food and invoice service

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the patient satisfaction with reference to the selected hospitals
- To explore and analyze the factors that contribute to the patients overall satisfaction using factor analysis

METHODOLOGY

The study evaluates different variables that play an important role in determination of patient satisfaction. Existing literature was reviewed to explore variables of patient satisfaction and assessed their relevance in the selected hospitals. The variables included in the study are Diagnostic centre assures accuracy, Clean and tidy premises, Good signage, Comfortable waiting rooms, well informed fee structure, Reasonable pricing of services, doctors listen carefully to all problems, doctors express genuine interest, doctors accurately diagnosis, doctors are very understanding and courteous, Good reception, Nurses express courtesy, Nurses provide appropriate and reliable information, Nurses are pleasing and profession, Nurses are supporting, worth visiting, recommend to others, Adequate facilities and Would like to continue to this hospital.

Primary data and secondary data were collected to draw meaningful conclusions. The study conducted exit survey using a structure questionnaire to 300 patients of selected hospital in the Rayalseema region of Andhra Pradesh.

The study adopts descriptive research. The sample was selected using convenience sampling method. Patients satisfaction item scale is designed on 5 point scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Respondent Profile

The sample comprises of 62.7% males and 37.3% females. Distribution of respondents by age shows 8.3% between 20-29 years, 14% between 30-39, 19.3% between 40-49, 33% between 50-59 and 25% are 60 and above. Respondents includes 4.7% illiterates, 19% school education, 31.3% post matriculation, 33% graduates and 12% post graduates. Respondent profile is perfectly skewed and is presented in the Table 1 along with means and standard deviations.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviations of Respondent Profile

	Gender	Age	Education
Mean	1.37	3.53	3.29
Std. Deviation	.484	1.239	1.053
Skewness	.526	-.550	-.214
Std. Error of Skewness	.141	.141	.141

Presentation of Findings

The descriptive statistics of all the variables that contribute for patient satisfaction are presented in the Table 2. The highest mean of all the variables is 3.98 and the highest standard deviation is 1.184. The KMO measures the sample adequacy and is 0.795 which is acceptable for satisfactory factor analysis. The factor analysis is appropriate as the sample size is 300. From the same table Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant with a chi-square value of 3.298E3 which is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.795
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	3.298E3
Df	300
Sig.	.000

Construct validity was established using factor analysis by Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization. Four factors are resulted for patient satisfaction. The study applied a minimum factor loading of 0.50 to consider the variable as significant. The four factors explain 56% variance of patient satisfaction. Reliability analysis was undertaken for individual factor again to measure the internal consistency and was presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Factor Loading and Cronobach's Alpha

Factor	Item	Factor Loading	Cronobach's Alpha
1	Diagnostic centre assures accuracy	.826	.882
	Clean and tidy premises	.808	
	Good signage	.834	
	Comfortable waiting rooms	.789	
	well informed fee structure	.738	
	Reasonable pricing of services	.670	
2	doctors listen carefully to all problems	.873	.732
	doctors express genuine interest	.653	
	doctors accurately diagnosis	.816	

	doctors are very understanding and courteous	.858	
3	Good reception	.719	.807
	Nurses express courtesy	.737	
	Nurses provide appropriate and reliable information	.521	
	Nurses are pleasing and profession	.770	
	Nurses are supporting	.708	
4	worth visiting	.608	.840
	recommend to others	.721	
	Adequate facilities	.840	
	Would like to continue to this hospital	.765	

Physical Dimensions of Services of the Hospital

The first factor grouped the items which are related to physical evidence that includes accuracy of diagnostic services, clean and tidy premises, good signage, comfortable waiting rooms, well informed fee structure and reasonable pricing of services. All these items are collapsed to form a single factor under the name physical dimensions of the service. The means and standard deviations are determined and found that patients are very much satisfied with all the items of physical dimensions of services. clean and tidy premises have highest mean of 3.95 followed by well informed fee structure (3.92), accuracy of diagnosis (3.86), comfortable waiting rooms (3.80), good signage (3.73) and reasonable pricing of services (3.60). The mean of the collapsed variable is found to be 3.80. This clearly indicates the patient satisfaction over the physical dimension of the services of the private hospitals selected. All the items grouped significantly related to the factor with correlation coefficient >0.5 as shown in Table 4

Table 4: Physical Dimensions of Services of the Hospital

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	R Value	P Value
Diagnostic centre assures accuracy	3.86	.982	.822	.000
Clean and tidy premises	3.95	.940	.826	.000
Good signage	3.73	.836	.853	.000
Comfortable waiting rooms	3.80	.859	.813	.000
well informed fee structure	3.92	.734	.762	.000
Reasonable pricing of services	3.60	.971	.709	.000
Physical Dimension of services (factor 1)	3.80	.707		

Doctors Approach towards Patient

The second factor grouped items relating to doctors approach towards patients that include doctors listen carefully to all problems, express genuine interest, accurately diagnosis and understanding & courteous. All the items are grouped to form doctor's approach towards patients and patients expressed their satisfaction with a mean of 3.59. Doctor understanding and courteous is rated highest mean of 3.70, followed by doctors express genuine interest (3.65), doctors accurately diagnosis (3.53) and doctors listen carefully to all problems (3.51). All the items are having significant relationship with the factor doctors approach towards satisfaction as correlation coefficient is >0.5 as shown in the Table 5

Table 5: Doctors Approach towards Patient

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	R Value	P Value
Doctors listen carefully to all problems	3.51	1.043	.879	.000
Doctors express genuine interest	3.65	.904	.675	.000
Doctors accurately diagnosis	3.53	1.029	.847	.000
Doctors are very understanding and courteous	3.70	1.184	.876	.000
Doctor approach (Factor 2)	3.59	.858		

Nursing Services Rendered by Hospitals

Third factor include good reception, nurses express courtesy, provide appropriate and reliable information, pleasing and professional and nurse are supporting are named as nursing services rendered by hospitals. All the items when collapsed to form a single variable and the patient satisfaction over the variable is found to satisfied with a mean of 3.5. Patients expressed satisfaction on all items of nursing services rendered by the hospitals with highest mean of 3.57 for good reception and nursing support, 3.53 for providing appropriate and reliable information by nurses, 3.48 for nurse's courtesy and 3.35 pleasing and professionalism of nurses. All the items are highly correlated with the factor nursing services rendered by hospitals with correlation coefficient >0.5 and significant as presented in Table 6

Table 6: Nursing Services Rendered by Hospitals

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	R Value	P Value
Good reception	3.57	.963	.742	.000
Nurses express courtesy	3.48	.976	.831	.000
Nurses provide appropriate and reliable information	3.53	.882	.689	.000
Nurses are pleasing and profession	3.35	.854	.751	.000
Nurses are supporting	3.57	.980	.744	.000
Nursing Services(Factor 3)	3.50	.700		

Overall Satisfaction

Fourth factor grouped items worth visiting the hospital, willing to recommend for others, satisfaction over adequacy of facilities and willing to visit again in case required is named as overall satisfaction of patients towards the hospital visited.

All the items collapsed to form the variable overall satisfaction and patients rated with a mean of 3.65. Patients expressed their satisfaction on all items grouped with highest mean for the item worth visiting (3.77) followed by willing to recommend for others (3.65), adequate facilities (3.64) and would like to continue to the hospital (3.54). All the items are having significant relationship with the overall satisfaction as correlation coefficient of all the items with overall satisfaction measure is >0.5 as presented in the Table 7

Table 7: Overall Satisfaction of Patients

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	R Value	P Value
worth visiting	3.77	1.043	.715	.000
recommend to others	3.65	.940	.744	.000
Adequate facilities	3.64	.824	.812	.000
Would like to continue to this hospital	3.54	.922	.730	.000
	3.65	.696		

CONCLUSIONS

Patient satisfaction towards hospital in the private sector is influenced by Physical dimensions of the service, doctor's approach towards patients and nursing services. It is clear from the study that a satisfied patient feels visiting the hospital as worth, recommends for others about the adequacy of facilities and continues to the hospital for his future requirements. Private hospitals must continuously assess the patient satisfaction and design their services in the light of their expectations. Patient visit private hospitals with expectation of customized services and early relief for ailment. Private hospitals must look at the patient as customer and provide services such that he gets delighted and communicates well about the hospital and hospital personnel.

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